

Message Text

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21

ACTION EA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1204

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

CINCPAC HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT MORESBY 0118

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, PP

SUBJECT: BOUGAINVILLE TALKS COMMENCE

1. CLOSED DOOR TALKS ON BOUGAINVILLE COMMENCED ON FEBRUARY 16 ON AN ISLAND HALF MILE FROM KIETA. PRESS REPORTED ON THE 17TH JOINT ANNOUNCEMENT TO EFFECT THAT BOTH SIDES PLEDGED TO MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO SETTLE THE SECESSION DISPUTE BY NEGOTIATION. TALKS DESCRIBED IN JOINT STATEMENT AS "THE FIRST MEANINGFUL DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES SINCE NEGOTIATIONS BROKE DOWN BEFORE INDEPENDENCE LAST YEAR." THE ATMOSPHERE SURROUNDING THE TALKS REPORTEDLY GOOD, AND BOTH SIDES ARE ATTEMPTING TO ESTABLISH THE MAIN AREAS OF DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THEM. NEITHER EXPECTS A FULL SETTLEMENT FOR SOME TIME AS THERE EXIST MANY AREAS OF CONTENTION. MEDIA REPORTED THIS SESSION WILL CONCLUDE AT END OF SECOND DAY.

2. SIR MAORI KIKI WAS DROPPED FROM DELEGATION ACCORDING TO PRESS BECAUSE HE IS SUFFERING FROM MALARIA. WHEN AMBASSADOR SAW HIM FEBRUARY 14 HE APPEARED IN GOOD HEALTH AND POSSIBLY HE REMAINED IN MORESBY TO KEEP A HAND ON THE GOVT. RABBIE NAMALIEU (EAST NEW BRITAIN PROV COMMISSIONER AND FORMER PRIVATE SEC TO SOMARE) WAS ADDED TO DEL, ALONG WITH BENSON GEGEYO, BOUGAINVILLE PROV COMMISSIONER, TO SUPPORT SOMARE AND TAMMUR.
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3. THE SECESSIONISTS ARE REPRESENTED BY FATHER JOHN MOMIS, LEO HANNET, RAPHAEL BELE (FORMER PARLIAMENT MEMBER FROM CENTRAL BOUGAINVILLE,) AND JOHN TEOSIN (NORTH BOUGAINVILLE), JOHN DAKENI (CENTRAL BOUGAINVILLE) AND ALOYSIUS NOGA (SOUTH BOUGAINVILLE). DR. ALEXIS SAREI WAS AN UNEXPECTED OMISSION ON THE BOUGAINVILLE SIDE AND MAY BE FULFILLING A FUNCTION SIMILAR TO THAT OF KIKI.

4. COMMENT: EARLIER THIS YEAR RABBIE NAMALIU WAS SEEKING SUITABLE FORMULA WHICH WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE TO BOTH SIDES. HE HAS THOUGHT CONSISTENTLY IN TERMS OF CONCILIATION AND HIS PRESENCE ON THE TEAM IS ANOTHER INDICATION THAT THE GOVT IS WILLING TO MAKE MAJOR CONCESSIONS TO THE SECESSIONISTS.

5. PRESS MAY WELL INTERPRET MAJOR GPNG CONCESSIONS AS A DEFEAT FOR SOMARE. THIS GOVT, HOWEVER, IS HIGHTLY CENTRALIZED, AND THERE IS MUCH ROOM FOR DECENTRALIZATION WITHOUT CREATING A CENTRAL GOVT SO WEAK AS TO BE INEFFECTIVE. HENCE THE PRECISE TERMS OF THE AGREEMENT (IF ONE IS REACHED) AND HOW THE TERMS ARE INTERPRETED AND IMPLEMENTED, WILL BE IMPORTANT AS WILL THE IMPACT OF THOSE TERMS ON OTHER AREAS OF PNG.
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